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**Should prayer be allowed in schools?**

Highness Zayed Bin Sultan did something in 2001 that made many people in the UAE divide in two parts: some supported Bin Sultan’s idea, and the others who opposed the idea. I was one of the people who supported the idea without any background what are they talking about. His Highness’s idea was to allow prayer in school and he allocated an open (unlimited) amount of money to build spaces to pray for the students depending on the religions of the students at each school; in condition, that the students should reach a specific percentage in their school. Many people disagreed and said that His Highness’s idea will be waste of time because students came to study not to pray; so they should get enough time to study. They also said that the same idea will interrupt the students and the teachers, and will enlarge the gap between the students who are not members on the same religion. Consequently, there was a period of time that citizens and immigrants were arguing with each other about whether the plan “should”, or “shouldn’t” become reality. On that time of conflict, the same headline printed on many newspapers all over the country, as if all the newspaper editors agreed secretly to publish the same title; which was “Should prayer be allowed in schools?”

At that time, I was in my primary school and I was not really aware about what are the students and the teachers in our school arguing each other about; and I was too young to understand what are they talking about. What I remember that every morning different group of students tries to persuade the others to do something. I was not really sure what was the topic they were talking about because the students and the teachers used high level and complicated words in order to argue and persuade the others. Our school asked every single student on it to know in which side we are, even the children because they know that the parents will participate by there children; so, everybody is giving an opinion even the parents. As I said, I was too young (on that time) to understand what are they talking about. When they asked me I voted yes, not because my parents told me what to do, but because I knew that “yes” will change something in our school and I wanted to see the change because the teaching style was so boring and I hated it. Two years later, “Now, I am old enough to understand what was happening”. I surprised about the other side’s opinion, who were opposed His Highness’s idea, because of three reasons: individual freedom, benefits that faith has on students and parents rights to raise their children the way they want to.

One of the major things that comes with the birth of all children and never left them until they die is freedom of will. If I was born free, no one has the right to take away my freedom except the one who gave it to me, which is in my faith Allah (God). In general, no one can prevent any person from doing anything forever. For example, if in school there is a place to pray and students want to pray, the school cannot prevent them from praying or at least this prevention will not exist for a long time. If the school closes the place that students use to pray in, the student will pray as soon as they arrive home or find another way or place, because this is a habit that they grew up with.

Unfortunately, there could be bad consequences that may harm the school atmosphere. One reason can be, some students will not be comfortable in the schools that prevent such students from doing their believes and that’s may lead the students to have bad grades at the end; because if any person did not feel comfortable in anything he/she will not be successful in that field. So, this is one of the ways of how it can lead students to get bad grades. Another reason, Students may take the decisions to leave the school to go to another school in order to find the freedom and the tolerance that they are missing. There is only one solution in this situation, which is to give students the freedom to practice their faith unless it is harming the scool or its students and teachers.

Another reason supports “giving students the freedom to pray should be allowed in schools” is that faith affects students’ confidence and performance. Some students, usually who believe in God, believe that praying for help to get good grades is calming and comforting for them. When these students pray in school, usually before quizzes and tests, they may feel more comfortable and confident when they take their exams and not as stressed as other students about getting good grades

One of the reasons that made many parents participated and voted that prayer should be allowed in schools is that these parents want their children to continue to grow up with the “religion” stated in their son’s mind. Some of these parents also believe that schools should teach the students the religious lessons before academic lessons because they believe that religious lessons is the best basic information their son could get. As a result, if the school refuses to let the students pray, parents would transfer their children to another school would allow it and these schools are the only looser side.

From my perspective, prayer should be allowed in schools because it shows a part of religious freedom. Also, it gives the parents the opportunity to let their children grow up according to the parents’ beliefs, values, traditions and faith. Moreover, it would let the students to live with their believes with less problems between religion and education and will lead the students to get good grades because they will find everything pushing to learn and no problems with believes that could interrupt their studies. His Highness Zayed had the vision and the wisdom to see what was best for the future rather than simply the present.